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3-31-2006

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Recommended Citation

Sims, David, "Statewide Geographic Database Launches New Online Mapping Tool" (2006). *UNH Today*. 1126.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/1126>

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Statewide Geographic Database Launches New Online Mapping Tool

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March 31, 2006

DURHAM, N.H. -- The New Hampshire Geographically Referenced Analysis and Information Transfer System (NH GRANIT) has launched a new mapping tool that makes the statewide geographic database available over the web.

The NH GRANIT Data Mapper offers New Hampshire communities, agencies and organizations, and the general public access to the system's comprehensive collection of archived geospatial data. The data – such as town boundaries, lakes and ponds, roads, wetlands, soils, conservation lands, and aerial imagery – and the related tools are designed to inform and expand decision-making at the local, regional, and statewide levels.

The Data Mapper was developed by NH GRANIT staff at the University of New Hampshire's Complex Systems Research Center (CSRC), in collaboration with the UNH Research Computing Center. The primary objective of the site is to support communities by providing maps and analyses typically incorporated in community master plans. It will also assist local land use boards, including planning boards and conservation commissions, who need access to mapped information in order to respond to the issues and challenges they confront.

According to Fay Rubin, NH GRANIT manager, "This tool offers a significant technical resource to the many rural communities in the state with either a small planning staff or none at all. It also offers a valuable resource to larger communities by providing the capacity to view and query data at a multi-community or regional level."

For example, Rubin says, a typical community inquiry might be, "Are there important water resources in close proximity to a proposed, large development site?" With a color aerial photograph as a reference, a user could zoom into the target area and map lakes and ponds, rivers, wetlands, poorly drained soils, and stratified drift aquifers to assess what resources might be impacted by the proposed development. He or she could also view topographic data to determine how the proposed site is situated on the landscape relative to those resources. Additionally, the user could download a report describing the characteristics of the features that are displayed.

The geographic data sets are organized into functional "themes" corresponding to standard maps used in community planning. Four themes are currently available for viewing, including a Base Map, Transportation, Water Resources, and Land Conservation.

In an ongoing effort, the data sets and tools provided in the existing themes will be continually updated and enhanced. For example, as new road data sets and related

transportation layers become available, they will be incorporated in the online maps. In the coming year, NH GRANIT also plans to add a number of new themes, one of them being Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

As public interest in Internet mapping sites continues to increase, GRANIT staff expects a growing audience of users to visit the site and explore the available data sets and tools. For example, a property-owner may want to zoom into an area of interest – the town or watershed they live in – and display an aerial photograph, locate protected lands near their home, determine what types of wetlands are in their community, and print out a map of the results.

“We are grateful to the New Hampshire GIS Conservation Collaborative for supporting the development of the Data Mapper, and we’re excited to be able to offer this important new tool to our constituents in the state,” Rubin notes. “We know there is a great need for this kind of capability, not only for community planning efforts but also to support a wide range of geographically-based inquiries, many of which we cannot anticipate. We encourage users to send us feedback on how they’re applying the tool and what additional capabilities they would find useful.”

NH GRANIT is a cooperative project to create, maintain, and make available a statewide geographic database serving the information needs of state, regional, and local decision-makers. A collaborative effort between UNH and the NH Office of Energy and Planning, the core NH GRANIT System is housed at the CSRC within the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS) in Durham.

To use the new GRANIT tool and learn more, visit <http://mapper.granit.unh.edu>. For further information about GRANIT, visit <http://www.granit.sr.unh.edu>.